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July 27, 2017

United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator:

On behalf of our three million members and the 50 million students they serve, we strongly urge you to VOTE NO on the “skinny” health bill crafted by GOP Senate leadership that would repeal portions of the Affordable Care Act. Votes associated with this issue may be included in NEA’s Report Card for the 115th Congress.

In response to a request from Democrats, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) scored a prototype of the skinny bill. CBO found that over the next decade, it would cause 16 million people to lose health coverage and substantially increase premiums for policies sold on the exchanges — as much as 20 percent, according to multiple media reports. Clearly, this result falls far short of the better, more affordable health coverage GOP leadership has repeatedly promised to provide.

Equally troubling is the process for developing the skinny bill and the other two health bills voted down yesterday. GOP leadership drafted this legislation behind closed doors with no hearings, no input from the American people, and no input from the majority of senators from either party. One probable outcome is to use the skinny bill merely to move to a House-Senate conference that may do its work in secrecy, while Congress is in recess. From there, a potential outcome is an agreement to “fix” the Affordable Care Act by radically restructuring and rolling back federal funding for Medicaid, which covers 40 percent of all children and 60 percent of children with disabilities.

To compensate for the loss of federal support, states are likely to divert money from education to health care as well as limit the number of Medicaid beneficiaries, the scope of Medicaid benefits, or both. Services essential for students to learn and thrive would be in jeopardy, especially for students with disabilities and special needs. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Medicaid reimburses schools for mental health care, vision and hearing screenings, diabetes and asthma management, wheelchairs and hearing aids, and more. That support is substantial — \$4 billion a year, according to AASA, the school superintendents association.

Just yesterday, the Senate defeated that approach by a significant margin. And now, growing numbers of senators from both parties are calling for a return to regular order.

Senator John McCain put it this way: “Let the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee under Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray hold hearings, try to report a bill out of committee with contributions from both sides. Then bring it to the floor for

amendment and debate, and see if we can pass something that will be imperfect, full of compromises, and not very pleasing to implacable partisans on either side, but that might provide workable solutions to problems Americans are struggling with today.”

We strongly urge you to VOTE NO on the skinny health bill. Instead, the Senate needs to return to regular order and the bipartisan approach advocated by Senator McCain and so many of his colleagues on both sides of the aisle.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marc Egan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marc Egan
Director of Government Relations
National Education Association